

Two (further) Example Sections



Plain Text

Featuring a plain English translation of the Shakespeare text.

Created to support the teaching of two set sections for a particular English Test in the UK, this document can be used for more general study of the play. This document is presented as linework to allow fast downloading and easy printing.

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THE TEMPEST**(The Condensed Story)**

Prospero is the rightful Duke of Milan, but his treacherous brother Antonio, helped by the King of Naples, deposes Prospero and casts him and his three-year-old daughter Miranda adrift in a small boat, expecting them to drown. The boat, however, has been secretly equipped with food, water, a great many books and survival equipment by Gonzalo, the king's advisor – a kind and optimistic man. Prospero and Miranda survive and become marooned on a remote island. Over the next twelve years, Prospero perfects his skills as a sorcerer, through his great learning and his library of books. He rescues Ariel, an "airy spirit", from a tree and is reluctantly served by Ariel from then on. The island is also inhabited by Caliban, son of Sycorax, an Algerian witch who was exiled to the island but died before Prospero's arrival and who was responsible for imprisoning Ariel in the tree. Caliban is a deformed monster and he's initially adopted and raised by Prospero, teaching Prospero and Miranda how to survive, while they teach him astronomy and language. However, Caliban is enslaved by Prospero after he [Caliban] tries to force himself upon Miranda. After this, Caliban resents Prospero, as he believes the island belongs to him.

Twelve years have passed when the play opens. A ship carrying Antonio back from Tunis, along with the King of Naples, his son Ferdinand and brother Sebastian and Gonzalo (the king's advisor) is caught in a terrible storm. This Tempest (hence the name of the play) has been conjured up by Prospero and Ariel to wreck the ship as it passes close to their island. The 'survivors' of the conjured storm come ashore on the island and are separated into three groups by Prospero's spells. Three plots then alternate through the play. In the first, Caliban forms an alliance with Stephano and Trinculo, two drunken crew members, who Caliban believes have come from the moon, and they plot to overthrow Prospero. In the second, Prospero works to establish a romantic relationship between Ferdinand and Miranda and the couple fall in love. Prospero compels Ferdinand to become his servant to prove his affection for Miranda. In the third plot, Antonio and Sebastian conspire to kill the King of Naples and his advisor Gonzalo, so that Sebastian can become king.

Prospero, helped by Ariel, thwarts the plots and manipulates the course of his enemies' paths through the island, drawing them closer and closer to him. In conclusion, all the characters are brought before Prospero, who warns them not to get involved in betrayal in future, then forgives them. The king is repentant for his part in the original plot against Prospero and welcomes the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda – though Antonio and Sebastian never actually say they're sorry for their 'sins'. The ship has been lying in a cove during this time, with the sailors 'sleeping'. Prospero now brings the ship's Master and Boatswain ashore, to ensure they all get back safely to Italy, where Ferdinand and Miranda will be married and Prospero will retire to his Dukedom of Milan. Prospero sets Ariel free at the end to "follow Summer merrily" and Caliban is the only one who remains behind on the island. In an epilogue, Prospero invites the audience to set *him* free from his "bands" [bonds] with applause.

SECTION 1

Act 3, Scene 2

Background

The island in *The Tempest* is ostensibly located in the Mediterranean, but has features of the Caribbean or South America and suggests a new and unfamiliar world to early 17th century theatregoers – a world of imagination and magical rejuvenation, transformation and restoration. The island almost seems alive with magic and this setting is utilised to explore themes ranging from social order, to the supernatural, to the conflict between ‘civilised’ man and nature.

Caliban is a “deformed savage” – the son of Sycorax, an Algerian witch who was exiled to the island years before and is now dead. Caliban was educated by Prospero and Miranda when they arrived on the island, but he tried to rape Miranda and has since been treated as a slave by Prospero. As he was on the island first, Caliban believes the island belongs to him. When Stephano and Trinculo come ashore from the ship, he believes Stephano is the ‘Man in the Moon’ and treats him like a god, especially when Stephano gives him wine – “celestial liquor” – to drink. Caliban asks Stephano to kill Prospero for him, but he takes a dislike to Trinculo.

Caliban is, in many ways, a sympathetic character, who questions the value of civilisation as it is presented to him – a character who has been displaced from the territory that was his in the first place, thus representing many indigenous peoples who were displaced by expanding empires during this great age of discovery.

Stephano and Trinculo depict exploitation at its worst in their treatment of Caliban, getting him drunk and using him to try to gain control of the island. This can also be taken to represent the European colonists of the New World, which was beginning to become more accessible when the play was written – Miranda herself first coins the phrase “brave new world”.













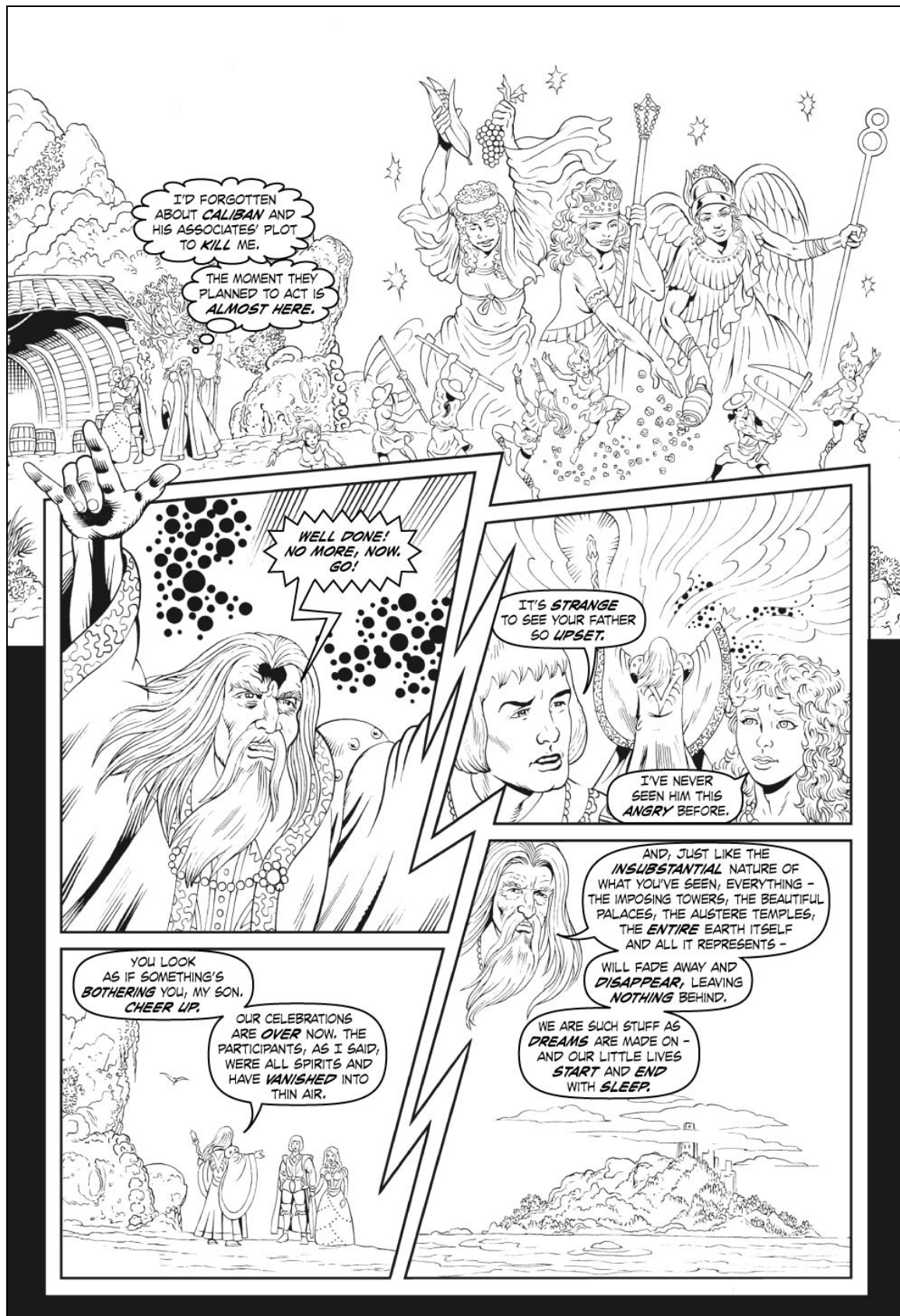
SECTION 2**Act 4, Scene 1, lines 139 to 262****Background**

Prospero rules the island as magician-king, using Ariel, other spirits and his white magic. His assumption of god-like power is arrogant, even blasphemous. He must overcome his vengeful feelings against those who wronged him. He may seem patriarchal, colonial and even sexist to modern audiences but, in the end, he decides to forgive those who harmed him and give up his magic and his self-importance.

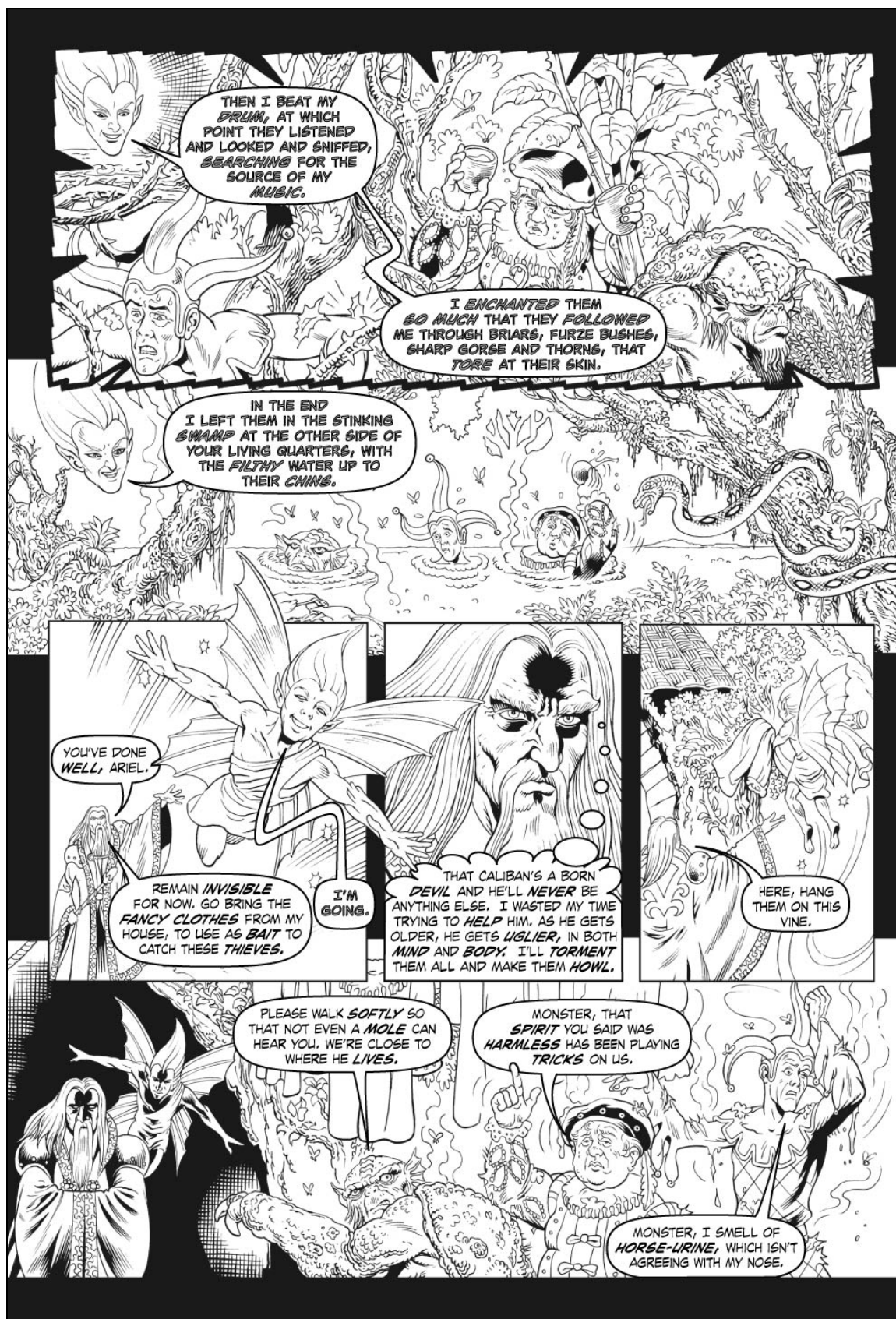
Prior to the section illustrated here, Prospero has told Ferdinand that he has passed all his [Prospero's] trials and has proved his love for Miranda. Prospero has offered his daughter in marriage to Ferdinand. However, Prospero has also warned against pre-marital sex and Ferdinand agrees not to be ruled by lust.

Ariel has arrived to perform his last service, a ceremonial spirit-wedding, before Prospero keeps his promise to set him free. Ariel arranges for Spirits to masquerade as Roman and Greek Goddesses and he conjures up Nymphs and Reapers to dance for the couple and celebrate their “true love”.

The mood changes when Prospero remembers Caliban's plot to kill him.























DRAMATIS PERSONAE

(in alphabetical order)

	<p>ADRIAN <i>A Lord</i></p>
	<p>ALONSO <i>King of Naples</i> The father of Ferdinand, Alonso originally helped Antonio to oust Prospero from Milan. He regrets this now, and wants to make up with him.</p>
	<p>ANTONIO <i>Prospero's brother</i> Antonio is Prospero's wicked brother. Twelve years before the play starts, Antonio betrayed Prospero, and stole his dukedom. His hunger for power continues even after he is shipwrecked on the island, persuading Sebastian to help him to kill Alonso. Despite all that, Prospero forgives Antonio at the end of the play.</p>
	<p>ARIEL <i>An Airy Spirit</i> Prospero controls a number of spirits, but Ariel is the most powerful – and mischievous. The witch Sycorax (Caliban's mother) trapped Ariel within a tree; from where he was rescued by Prospero. From that moment on, Prospero had complete control over Ariel, and it is Ariel who carries out the tasks to bring Prospero's plans to fruition.</p>
	<p>BOATSWAIN <i>of the ship</i> This coarse character appears at the start and end of the play. He remains calm and competent in the storm, much to the anger of the other noblemen.</p>
	<p>CALIBAN <i>A Deformed Savage</i> Caliban is the son of the deceased witch Sycorax. Like Ariel, he is one of Prospero's servants, but he is unhappy with that situation because he believes that the island is his – and that Prospero stole it from him.</p>

	<p>FERDINAND <i>The King's Son</i> Although he is the son of Alonso, Ferdinand is honest and “true”. He falls in love with Miranda, and does anything he can to gain the approval of Prospero.</p>
	<p>FRANCISCO <i>A Lord</i></p>
	<p>GONZALO <i>A Counsellor</i> Gonzalo is an old, honest lord, who helped Prospero and Miranda to escape from Milan when Antonio took his title. When he is shipwrecked on the island with Alonso, he tries to keep his spirits up, despite the insults and threats he receives from Antonio and Sebastian.</p>
	<p>MIRANDA <i>Prospero's daughter</i> Prospero brought his daughter away with him when he was exiled from Milan. She would only have been a small child at the time. She has a distant memory of having servants waiting on her, but the only men she has seen have been her father, and Caliban (who is hardly a man!). She is pure, honest, if not a little naïve – however she is completely devoted to her father.</p>
	<p>PROSPERO <i>Duke of Milan</i> Prospero is the main character of the play, in that he orchestrates the whole plot. Twelve years prior to the setting of the play, he was the Duke of Milan. He was usurped by his brother Antonio, helped by Antonio's friend Alonso (the King of Naples). Gonzalo helped Prospero and his daughter Miranda to flee for their lives in a boat that brought them to the island where the play is set. Prospero used the time on the island to develop his magical powers so that he could exact revenge on his enemies.</p>
	<p>SEBASTIAN <i>The king's brother</i> Sebastian is as wicked as Antonio, and is easily persuaded to help him kill Alonso when they are shipwrecked on the island.</p>

	<p>STEPHANO <i>A Drunken Butler</i> Shipwrecked with Trinculo, the two of them provide comedy to the play, and along with Caliban, they plot to kill Prospero so that Stephano can be King of the Island.</p>
	<p>TRINCULO <i>A Jester</i> Providing comedy to the play, Trinculo and Stephano get drunk and plot to kill Prospero, which would make Stephano King of the Island.</p>

BACKGROUND TO THE PLAY

The Tempest is widely regarded as the last play that Shakespeare wrote on his own [there were some later collaborations]. Although listed as a comedy in the first Folio, many modern editors have relabelled it as a romance.

At the time it was written, it did not attract a significant amount of attention and was, to some extent, ignored. However, in the 20th century, the play received a sweeping re-appraisal by critics and scholars and it is now considered to be one of Shakespeare's greatest works.

Whether Shakespeare mastered the colonial debate he introduces in *The Tempest* or not is open to argument – and it may very well be just romantic wishful-thinking to associate his and Prospero's farewell to their respective art forms – nevertheless, it's an irresistible idea because, in the end, we are greatly moved by the sense of completion and humility and the combination of joyful triumph and calm resignation contained in the valedictory epilogue.